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Conducting a Russian newspaper.



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CONDUCTING A RUSSIAN
NEWSPAPER

by

Wolf von Schierbrand

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[Excerpt from the World's Work,
January, 1903]

CONDUCTING A RUSSIAN NEWSPAPER

FOR PERMISSION TO PUBLISH A NEWSPAPER A PETITIONER MAY WAIT
TEN YEARS—THE LIMITATIONS PLACED ON CENSORED PERIODICALS
—THE DANGERS RUN BY PUBLICATIONS THAT ARE "CENSOR-FREE"

BY

WOLF VON SCHIERBRAND

WE often read about the censorship of the Russian press. How does it work in everyday practice? How does a Russian editor conduct his paper under it? Outside of Turkey there is no other country where the public intellect as expressed in newspapers, periodicals and books or pamphlets is fettered as in Russia. This more than anything else makes amalgamation with Russia inexpressibly hard for the Finns, bred as they are to untrammelled assertion of their thoughts and convictions; and perhaps no other form of Russian official life gives a clearer insight into the difference between Russia and the rest of the world.

The greatest and most multiform restrictions are those imposed upon the daily press. For the dominating idea of Russian censorship is to guard the mind of the whole nation against intellectual influences inimical to prevailing political and social conditions—against everything which Western notions deem progressive, in fact, to change of any kind. That the influence of the daily press, exerted incessantly and upon broad strata of society, is most to be dreaded from this point of view cannot be denied. A whole chain of obstacles and safeguards therefore tightly encompasses the Russian press.

First, to issue a periodical organ, the Government concession must be obtained. This requires time and money, and even with these is uncertain. First the sum of 5,000 roubles (about \$2,800) must be deposited with the Government when the application is made, this money remaining permanently in its hands. Then at best comes a long, long wait, generally several years. But that by no means insures success, even if assiduous and never-tiring efforts are used to fortify the application. A concession cannot be insisted upon as a right, nor is it subject to certain specific and inflexible conditions. Neither

the applicant's admitted eminent literary qualifications and repute, nor his irreproachable political belief and conduct, nor his high and influential social position, suffices in itself to obtain one. The Chief of the High Press Administration and the Minister of the Interior can act entirely as they please, and give their final answer in either one or ten years. Sometimes not a single concession is accorded for a number of years, and then there follows a plethora. Curious stipulations are often made. Thus, the recently displaced chief of the bureau stated publicly that he would confer concessions exclusively upon petitioners known personally and favorably to him, and he adhered to the rule.

Every newspaper must have a "responsible" editor and publisher, specially confirmed by the High Press Administration. Thus they become *quasi* Government officials. The "responsible" editor can lose his qualification only by becoming guilty of specific acts. The owner or publisher of the paper cannot discharge him, although he can diminish or take away his salary. The only remedy is then for the paper to ask the bureau to sanction a change—which may or may not be done. Only in case of the "responsible" editor's leaving Russia or becoming guilty of some distinct crime will he lose his place and title. The publishing rights can likewise be transferred only with the previous permission of the bureau, which is very difficult to get. Religious faith is important. Jews are excluded under all circumstances.

If a paper or periodical has its concession annulled, both editors and publishers lose forever the right of issuing or writing for any similar publication.

Concessions are always granted only after the approval of a programme closely outlined by the petitioner, to be adhered to during the lifetime of the publication. The

High Press Administration curtails in advance this programme as much as possible. Hence Russia has many publications of oddly circumscribed scope. Many of them—particularly in the provinces and in the rural regions—have only the concession to publish advertisements, while others must not publish political articles or telegrams, and nearly all of them are not allowed to report the public military trials. If the subscription price of a newspaper does not exceed six roubles a year, it must not engage in any discussion of the existing laws, nor in what is called "high politics." On the other hand, if a publication fails to make a regular feature of any topics included in its scheduled programme, the programme is then correspondingly cut down. In case of suspension, no matter from what cause, the permit of publication ceases within a year.

A concession to publish a paper or periodical is given only to persons toward whom either the High Press Administration or the Minister of the Interior feels well disposed. A real journalist is hardly ever made "responsible" editor. The authorities do not feel confidence enough in him. It is nearly always Government officials, retired army officers and similarly situated persons who receive the sanction of the authorities. The late Chief of the Bureau, Ssolovieff, went further. He forced upon the publishers his personal friends as "responsible" editors.

Despite all these precautions, most new concessions get into the hands of writers more or less identified with the progressive movement in the empire; for the publications of the reactionary, autocratic, old-fashioned type cannot exist—if one excepts a bare few—without large Government subsidies. The educated classes in Russia, high and low, simply refuse to read and support them, and this less from reasons of political and social conviction than because these old-fashioned sheets are too dull, since they have to exclude nearly all sensational and entertaining news matter. There is also another element, omnipresent in the Czar's domains—official corruption, which accounts for the transfer of concessions granted to men of reactionary tendencies to men of different leanings. A glaring case is that of M. Ssasonoff, formerly the official publisher of *Rossya*, an influential daily recently suppressed. He sold his concession for an immense sum. M.

Golovinsky sold his concession for the *Sseverny Courier* to Prince Bariatsky for 50,000 roubles in cash and other emoluments.

If these precautionary measures have not been quite successful, their baleful effect is nevertheless very perceptible. It is due to them that M. Ssuvorine has maintained the practically monopolistic position of the *Nova Vremya*, a paper which is a very champion of political opinion—now Governmental, again moderately liberal, next jingoistic, reactionary, just as the weather varies. The political current in Russia indicates, in fact, which precisely by these methods has forced to the head of Russian newspapers. For a short time it looked as if the *Rossya* would dispute its rank, but its editor-in-chief one day recklessly began to attack the Imperial family in the guise of ironical praise. He and his publisher had the highest connections at court and in the army, as well as in Government circles, and on this account Prince Chakhovskoi had pardoned many transgressions. But this last escapade was not forgiven. It precipitated the ruin and permanent suppression of the *Rossya*, and landed M. Amfiteatroff in Siberia. It is therefore, opportunism turned into a fine art, which alone will enable owners of and writers for Russian papers to avoid, at least for a time, the fate of being ruled out of existence, though in the long run even the most accomplished artist cannot escape that fate.

According to the experience of the last twenty years in Russian journalism, a paper succeeds it will be suppressed; if not suppressed it must forego success. Russian papers are forever oscillating between these two goals. Even the blackest, dirtiest in-the-wool reactionary sheet realizes from time to time that it must make a bid for popular favor by printing something it ought not to print and thereby risking, actually incurring penalties, even suppression, simply to increase again its dwindling subscription list. Even the most liberal sheet must at times spread the cloak of reactionism over their columns in order to save themselves from annihilation.

There are two classes of newspapers in Russia—the so-called "censor-free" and the "censored." The "censor-free" paper is, of course, a misnomer, for it is not only subject to censorship, but is also forbidden from printing whole departments of legitimate

news, and many specific items. But, after all, it enjoys more latitude than the "censored" papers. The latter, which print only news, comment, editorials, literary matter of every description, criticism, etc., approved by the censor, as testified by his signature on every proof slip, run, of course, no danger. But such censored papers have neither influence nor a large number of readers. Financially they lead a very precarious existence, and are never heard of outside their immediate neighborhood.

It is the "censor-free" papers that alone represent the Russian press, taking that word in its Western sense, though they are subject to preventive censorship and delay in just those features of news which in other countries are hastened, and which form, in their greater wealth of details and in their speedier receipt, the chief difference between the less enterprising and successful newspaper and its more enterprising and successful rival. This list comprises telegrams, reports of the sessions of city councils, *zemstvos*, and other important local news, all court news, the appearance of cholera and other epidemics, and so on. Many departments of news must only be given after official information (if obtainable, else not at all), such as news of riots, revolutions, movements of the army, all Government measures and appointments and dismissals. Some kinds of news must never be touched on: for instance, suicides, internal conditions of Russian schools and universities, strikes, lockouts, and all other labor news, even including editorials on labor statistics, the duration of working hours and wage scales. Political murders, all plots of a political nature, dissertations on anarchism, socialism (even in other countries), and any other news "calculated to disturb the peace of mind of the Russian subject," as the Government decree has it, are also strictly tabooed. Religious news, including such cases as Tolstoi's, is, of course, excluded. Very often circulars are issued prohibiting the press from mentioning certain events, such as sensational trials, and in many cases extending this prohibition to matters trivial or worse. One of these recent circulars forbade "further mention of the wives of the Sultan," for instance. Another time it was forbidden to discuss a theatrical scandal in connection with a new drama, called "The Smugglers,"

and still another time the papers were interdicted from chronicling the boycotting of the *Novoe Vremya* because of that paper's attitude on the university students' riots. For many years it was not allowed to speak of the sessions of the National Economic Society. Mention of particular newspaper articles, and polemics engendered thereby, is frequently proscribed.

This, then, is what is meant in Russia by the term "censor-free." Yet, with all these difficulties, most papers prefer this limited supervision, with all its attendant dangers and penalties, to the complete serfdom of the "censored" press. But the number of such "censor-free" papers is very limited, for the Government does not issue many concessions, even in place of those annulled. In the main it is only in St. Petersburg that such concessions are granted. In Moscow, even, no concessions for "censor-free" papers are any longer accorded. And it took a periodical of considerable ability in St. Petersburg several years to obtain permission to change from a "censored" into a "censor-free" publication.

The "warning" is one of the most formidable censoring weapons. According to the Imperial ukase, it requires three warnings before a paper or periodical can be entirely squelched. There are other weapons, of course, such as "temporary prohibition," "disallowance of the street sales of papers," and "interdiction to receive and publish advertisements." All these modes of punishment are, of course, severe enough, and if insisted upon long enough will sometimes ruin or embarrass a publication. But the "warning" is the most dreaded of all, next to complete suppression. Such "warnings" are given entirely according to the whim of the Minister of the Interior or of the Chief of the High Press Administration, sometimes for ludicrously small contraventions of the press regulations.

The worst punishment, suppression, is now meted out by the so-called "conference of ministers," composed of the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Education, and the Minister of Justice.

Censorship in Russia certainly retards progress. But will it stop it eventually? Signs are not lacking that it will not.

OUR INDUSTRIAL INVASION OF CANADA

THE MARVELOUS RESOURCES OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA AND HOW MEN FROM THE UNITED STATES ARE DEVELOPING THEM—A STUDY OF AMERICAN INFLUENCE MADE DURING A JOURNEY ACROSS THE CONTINENT

BY

ROBERT H. MONTGOMERY

C ECIL RHODES once passed his hand across the map of Africa and said, "I want to see this all red"—or, in other words, all British. A like American expansionist who hoped to see the North American continent "all red"—or controlled by the United States—could readily fancy, in taking such a trip as I recently took from Sydney, Nova Scotia, to Vancouver, that a reddish tinge covers territory far to the north of our northern political limits; or the industrial boundary of the United States runs in a waving line across the continent well within Canadian territory.

The story begins at the Atlantic threshold of Canada and proceeds to the Pacific Ocean—with American achievements all the way. And how did it begin? What, for example, called Mr. Henry M. Whitney, of Boston, from his finished task of giving Boston a rapid transit system, to a bleak and obscure coast village in Nova Scotia, and how did he manage great steel plants there? And what called other men across the boundary line? This is what I set out last June to discover.

"Why, if we Canadians had asked the bankers for a third of the money he secured and expended at Sydney," said a Montreal manufacturer, telling me of Mr. Whitney's methods, "they would have laughed at us." Yet Mr. Whitney had merely been acute enough to perceive what I found at Sydney, when I began my investigations, to be a unique opportunity and to explain it lucidly to other financiers. In the civilized world there is no other tide-water district where iron ore, limestone and coal are found so close together, so good and so easily obtainable. Coal, Mr. Whitney found, could be mined and put on shipboard at less than a dollar a ton. Limestone and iron ore were handy. Accordingly he set to work. As mining lands

in Canada are merely leased to operators who pay such high royalties that one-third of the Government revenue of Nova Scotia comes from the mines alone, it was necessary first to give strong guarantees to pay large royalties. He gave them. Thus political objections were overcome. Next the various Sydney coal companies were consolidated into the Dominion Coal Company and affiliated with the Dominion Iron and Steel Company. Limestone quarries were secured, and at Great Belle Island immense deposits yielding fifty-three per cent. of iron were obtained, lying so close to the water's edge that the cakes of ore were shoveled directly into the holds of ships. Cargoes of iron ore are delivered at Sydney from the Wabana mines for less than \$1.25 a ton. Stephen Jeans, an English authority, computes the cost of manufacturing hematite iron at the greatest steel centres of the world as follows: West Cumberland, England, \$15.65 a ton; Westphalia, Germany, \$13.50 a ton; Pittsburg, \$9.57 a ton. At Sydney the cost is \$7.45 a ton—without deducting the government bonus of \$2.70 on each ton of native ore and \$1.80 a ton for foreign ore manufactured in Canada, which would lower the net cost to \$5.65 or \$4.75 a ton according to the source of the ore. This was Mr. Whitney's discovery in Canada. When the works at Sydney are completed, they will turn out half a million tons of steel a year, and already plans are on foot to begin ship-building there.

Mr. Whitney has disposed of his control of the Dominion Iron and Steel Company, but it was his genius that created this typically American industry beyond our borders.

Sydney is 1,200 miles nearer European ports than Baltimore, the port nearest Pittsburg; 2,300 miles nearer Liverpool than Pensacola, the port nearest the Alabama iron district; and

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